



Insights into the Canadian Education System

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Institutional Background

- Historical Canada
 - 2 Languages
 - French/English
 - 2 Religions
 - Protestant/Catholic
- Impact on K-12 Education
 - Right to education in either language
 - Right to Catholic education
 - Rights do not extend to other types of non-protestant religions

Elementary/Secondary Education

- Very local
 - Historically: community based
 - Today:
 - **Provinces** control funding
 - & curriculum requirements
 - **Local school boards** control operations
- Role of federal government
 - Mostly non-existent

Variation Across Provinces

● Ontario

- 4 types of schools boards (language/religion)
 - All publicly funded
 - Catholic and Francophone parents effectively have choice in public schooling

● British Columbia

- 2 types of school boards (language)
- Private (Independent) schools
 - Can receive government funding
 - Max = 50%

Variation Across Provinces

- Kindergarten is sometimes required
 - In some provinces there are 2 years of kindergarten
- High school can be 3, 4, or 5 years
 - Ontario used to have a “grade 13”
 - Quebec students have 3 years of high school and then must attend a 2 year program before going onto university
- Some provinces provide distinct streams in high school that begin in grade 9
 - E.g. Preparation for technical/2 year college or university
- Most provinces have a fairly high drop-out rate



Post-Secondary Education: Universities

- Universities (3-4 year degrees) very distinct from colleges (1-2 year degrees)
- Mostly public in all provinces
- Bigger provinces: mostly a closed system for residents
 - High school students that go onto university usually stay within the province
- Smaller provinces often attract students from other provinces

Post-Secondary Education: Universities

● Funding

- From provincial governments
- Tuition is regulated
 - Provincial/Federal governments provide loans
- Research Funding: Federal/Provincial/Private

● Foreign students

- Embraced by universities

● Application to universities

- Very streamed
 - Apply/register in specific programs

Post-Secondary Education: Colleges

- Typically 2 year programs
 - Public and private
 - Newer in inception (1960s)
 - More regulated than universities
- Emphasizing a trade/technical skill
 - Minimal interaction with universities
 - Exception: Quebec
 - Starting to change

Quantitative Research Sources

- Federally

- Bulk of existing empirical work uses federal data
- Statistics Canada based surveys
 - Randomized samples, several waves
 - National Longitudinal Survey for Canadian Youth
 - Youth in Transition
 - National Graduates Survey
 - Collects socio-economic information
 - Tests
 - Surveys teachers, principals, parents

Limitations of Federal Data

- Expensive to collect
- Often lacks provincial/local institutional detail
 - E.g. Differences in service provision, policy/funding differences
- Focus of research
 - Returns to education
 - Labour market skills

Provincial based administrative data

- Schools, school boards, ministries of education
 - Student characteristics
 - High variability in approach across provinces
 - British Columbia: tracks students within public & private system since 1990
 - Ontario: recently started tracking students
 - High school students slightly different tracking
 - School characteristics
 - Often basic characteristics
 - Teacher data very difficult to obtain

Provincial/local based data

- Testing
 - Fairly recent across provinces
 - Early, middle, late testing
 - Linking test scores across grades can be problematic Surveys

Post-Secondary Data

- Administrative data
 - Application/Registration information
 - Performance
- Limitations
 - Difficult to track across institutions/provinces
 - Limited outcome measures
 - Linking across sources difficult

Field Experiments

- Very few
 - Elementary/secondary level
 - Financial access to post-secondary school
 - Post-secondary level
 - Incentives to perform well

Examples of Research

- Elementary/Secondary School
 - Effects of choice in public school on student performance
 - Effects of various policy changes on student performance
 - ESL programs, special needs, Aboriginal funding
 - Effects of introducing province wide testing on parental decisions
 - Relative age effects on student performance

Examples of Research

- Postsecondary

- Effects of university based scholarships on applications/registrations to university
- Determinants of post-secondary school attendance & successful transitions from high school
- Effects of policy changes on post-secondary education performance
- Returns to education & differential impact from delayed entry

Uses of the data/Contributions

- Nascent stage

- Bulk of education researchers in Canada are qualitative researchers
- Quantitative education research
 - Slowly being embraced by economists/sociologists

- Exception

- Greater use of federal data on post-secondary education system
 - Biggest contribution has been with respect to issues of student loans/accessibility issues

Constraints faced by researchers

- Accessibility
 - Bureaucratic and privacy issues
 - Slowly changing
- Quality of the data
 - Administrative data needs extensive transformation
 - Quality of data collection can be spotty
- Funding for research endeavours

Government/School Use of Data

- Very limited
 - Political considerations
 - Parliamentary system may discourage analysis of policy changes
 - Strong teacher unions
 - BC Teacher Union currently trying to end provincial wide testing
- Starting to see some changes
 - “data warehouses” to house data to be used for simple analyses are starting to crop up